

a demon.³¹ It is a means of highlighting the deviance of Jesus (cf. Q 7:33 with respect to John the Baptist's deviant and perhaps aggressive behaviour: "he has a demon").³²

Thus contrary to Morton Smith, Twelftree argues that the accusation of having a demon is in the fourth gospel not levelled against Jesus primarily by virtue of his magic, but by virtue of his teaching. It is questionable whether one can go as far as to eliminate *all* reference to Jesus' signs in these contexts,³³ but Twelftree is surely right that the accusation is not presented as solely related to his deeds of wonder-working. The outrage seems strongly directed against Jesus' message.³⁴

This provides an important clue to why there are no exorcisms in the fourth gospel. *The language of demon possession is not in the fourth*

thing, drawing upon Jewish views that Samaria was a demon-possessed land.³⁵ The view of some who interpret Jesus' silence regarding the charge of being a Samaritan as an implicit acceptance of the closeness of Jesus to the Samaritans (Lagarange, Odeberg, J. Bowman, O. Cullmann, E.D. Freed), Haacker rejects this latter hypothesis in view of the clear rejection of Samaritan views in John 4:22.

³¹ Just before the first demonising accusation, the people are concerned that Jesus is "leading the people astray" (John 7:12; cf. also 7:1). Such language is also particularly prevalent in apocalyptic writings with regard to the activity of Belial/Belial and his host of evil spirits: see L.J. Liebert Peckhote, *The influences of Satanist*, 4 *Traditio-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Treats on Eschatological Opponents* (Suppl. JSJ 49; Leiden/New York/Köln: Brill, 1996), esp. 194-205, 344-5.

³² The charge *δαίμωνιον ἔχειν* was a means of attacking an opponent or deviant (see also Mark 3:22 *Βεελζεβοὺλ ἔχειν*). It can depict either someone who is deviant, but marginalised and not harmful, or someone who poses a danger to others, such as sorcerers. Sorcerers, however, also had enhanced status by virtue of their power over others. The vocabulary of the fourth gospel never uses *φωτισκεῖται*, but the phrase "he has a demon" may reflect some of the confusion about Jesus' power and a hesitancy by Jesus' opponents to enhance Jesus' status any further than necessary. Perhaps this is why it is not phrased as "he is a sorcerer", but rather as "he has a demon". Yet his ability to lead others astray is clearly a threat.

³³ In both John 7:20 and 10:21 reference is made obliquely to the wonder-working of Jesus in close conjunction with the accusation.

³⁴ It is difficult entirely to agree with C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (2nd ed.; London: SPCK, 1978) 319) that the accusation means no more than "You are mad". An analysis of the language for deceit in John shows a striking conjunction with the accusations of "having a demon". Taking the vocabulary of lying and deceit isolated by J. Plith ("Lying and Deceit in the Letters to the Seven Churches: Perspectives from Cultural Anthropology", *BTB* 22 [1992] 126-7), almost all of that which appears in the fourth gospel is clustered around the three demonising accusations. The main exception is *δόλος* in John 1:47. The other references include the uses of (1) *πλάνω* in John 7:12, 47; (2) *ψεύδω* in John 8:44, 55; (3) *πλάνη*, *πλάνη*, *πλάνη* in John 10:33, 36. Plith does not include in his list *οὐκ ὁδοῦναι*, *οὐκ ὁδοῦναι*, which is referred specifically to Jesus' disciples being offended or falling away (apostasy?) in John 6:61 and 16:1.

*gospel related to matters of magical healing, but to rivalry. It is reserved for demonising one's opponents.*³⁶ Similar labelling is used by Jesus against his opponents (John 8:44).³⁷

But, interestingly, Twelftree himself does not seem fully to recognise the significance of this feature. He therefore feels constrained to find other (more theological, rather than boundary-related) reasons for explaining this feature of the fourth gospel, and he focuses on the *absence* of exorcisms rather than the *presence* of the accusations. He suggests three reasons for the former, which must be briefly considered if only to be rejected. Some of these may be consistent with a decreased emphasis on exorcisms, but none is really sufficient as a complete explanation for what is found in the fourth gospel.

1. Twelftree argues that John has a tendency in his gospel to opt for spectacular miracles. Exorcism stories, Twelftree suggests, are simply not spectacular enough to show Jesus as the Christ.³⁸

This is an intriguing argument, not least because of the way it seems to be the direct antithesis of the argument of Crossan that magic of any sort was increasingly an embarrassment in later Christian tradition. Nevertheless, Twelftree himself should be aware that exorcisms *can* be spectacular, as Mark 5:1-20 shows when the legion of demons is exorcised.³⁹ Surely the evangelist could have come up with an exorcistic extravaganza without much effort!

³⁵ For labelling and deviance theory, see Malina and Neyrey, *Calling*, and "Conflict in Luke-Acts: Labelling and Deviance Theory", in *The Social World of Luke-Acts. Models for Interpretation* (ed. J.H. Neyrey; Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 1991) esp. 99-110.

³⁶ Cf. E. Pagels, "The Social History of Satan, Part II: Satan in the New Testament Gospels", *JAFAR* 62 (1994) 26, 47.

³⁷ Twelftree, *Exorcism* 141-2, 170, 189; *Miracle Worker* 223; "Demon", 171. A variation of this occurs in Meier, *Marginal Jew* 2,637 n.18, who considers demons to be minor adversaries. Plummer ("Absence", 353-6) also suggests that exorcisms are not sufficiently unique, since there was also evidence of Jewish exorcists. Yet Plummer's view that the Evangelist was deliberately attempting to play down Jesus as a magician or wonderworker (p. 358) seemingly conflicts with Twelftree's observations about spectacular miracles being emphasised in this gospel. See also M. Labahn ("Between Tradition and Literary Art: The Miracle Tradition in the Fourth Gospel", *Bib* 80 [1999] 182-7), who ultimately rejects J. Becker's thesis that the evangelist meant to belittle the importance of the miracle stories included in his gospel.

³⁸ Rightly noted by Plummer ("Absence", 356). In contrast see also J.D.G. Dunn & G.H. Twelftree, "La Possession Démoniaque et l'Exorcisme dans le Nouveau Testament", *Habima* 5 (1992) 48-9. This article suggests a relative "silence" in the post-Easter church on the subject of exorcisms. Yet the exorcisms in Acts 8:7 and 16:16-18 (cf. 19:11-20) are noted, as well as possible allusions in Rom 15:19;

2. Secondly, Twelftree rightly notes that the fourth gospel plays down the theme of the kingdom of God. In the synoptic gospels, exorcisms are on occasions closely linked to the coming of the kingdom (cf. Luke/Q 11:20; Mark 1:39). Therefore, the argument goes, if John plays down the kingdom announcement, then one should not be surprised that it does not make much use of exorcisms.⁵⁹

This is a rather one-dimensional approach to exorcisms, however. Why should John have *only* seen exorcisms as related to the kingdom? The link between exorcisms and the expectations of the kingdom outside the synoptics is far from secure.⁶⁰ Klutz's work confirms also that despite the prevalence of interest in demons and exorcisms no early Christian *extracanonical* writing treats exorcism as an event with eschatological connotations.⁶¹ Surely John could have used them (as almost everything else) christologically, as part of the dualistic opposition between light and darkness, good and evil which pervades the gospel. But this leads to Twelftree's final point.

3. Thirdly, Twelftree draws attention to another contrast with the synoptic gospels. In the synoptics, he notes, the defeat of Satan is linked with exorcisms,⁶² in John's gospel Satan's defeat is linked to

⁵⁹ 1 Cor 12:9-10; and Heb 2:4 (and outside the canonical New Testament). The longer ending of Mark (16:17) is attributed to the 2nd century. One should also note that any such alleged tendency did not prevent a wealth of exorcism narratives in the synoptic gospels or the extracanonical evidence cited by Klutz below (n. 61).

⁶⁰ Also Dunn & Twelftree, "La Possession", 49.

⁶¹ E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 134-5. Interestingly, Twelftree (*Exorcism*, 189) seems to accept Sanders' argument that there is no self-evident link between exorcisms and Messiahship: "Indeed, if Jesus was, in his exorcisms, self-evidently the Messiah then it is difficult to explain why the Fourth Evangelist does not make use of what would potentially be a useful component in his Gospel."

⁶² Klutz ("With Authority", 381ff.) traces the continuation of interest in exorcism in the early church. He notes that Barnabas even sees conversion as having an exorcistic effect. Ignatius talks about Christian meetings keeping Satan at bay. Justin refers to prayer as a prophylactic against demons. Justin and Origen refer to the exorcistic efficacy of uttering certain powerful names, such as Jesus, etc. This suggests Christian and pagan exorcisms continued to occur. Celsus does not scoff at such views but actually issues countercharges of sorcery.

⁶³ This observation is itself not incontestable; see Aune, "Magic", 1531 n. 106, against H.C. Kee. With regard to Q 11:20, see also H. Räisänen, "Exorcisms and the Kingdom: Is Q 11:20 a Saying of the Historical Jesus?", in *Synkrisis and Strata: Essays on the Synoptic Gospel Q* (ed. R. Uro; Helsinki/Göttingen: Finnish Exegetical Society/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996) 119-42, who attributes the association of exorcisms with the coming kingdom to be a speciality of Q but not of Mark or necessarily of the historical Jesus.

the cross (12:31; 14:30; 16:11).⁶³ This is a point which shall be explored more later, but it is sufficient to observe here that however true the statement may be in itself, it is not adequate to explain why John would not include stories of or references to exorcisms. After all, John prefigures Jesus' death and resurrection through incidents reported earlier in his gospel, such as the raising of Lazarus, as noted by Twelftree.⁶⁴ Why could not exorcism stories similarly prefigure Satan's defeat at the cross in the Johannine scheme?⁶⁵

So, where does it leave us? It is not sufficient simply to try to account for the *absence* of exorcisms in John. Any such account must also explain the clear *presence* of interest in spirits and the language of spirit possession. Therefore what needs explanation is the shift from viewing demon possession primarily as something to be healed to viewing it mainly in terms of accusations of sorcery and demonising one's opponents. It becomes an instrument of rivalry.

Accusations and counter-accusations about *who* has a demon may express a theme which more indirectly emerges elsewhere in John. That an invasionist view of evil was widespread in the ancient world has been previously noted. Connected with this is the concept of pollution and its opposite, the concept of purity. One of the relatively neglected features of John's gospel is the extent to which the issue of purity has been considered a major theme.⁶⁶ The early location of the Temple incident is not insignificant in this respect.

⁶³ Twelftree, *Exorcism*, 142, 223-4. *Miracle Worker*, 223. G.C. Nicholson, in his *Death as Departure. The Johannine Descent-Ascent Schema* (SBLDS 63, Chico CA: Scholars, 1983) 132, more specifically sees the ruler of this world judged as a direct result of the "exaltation of the Son of Man".

⁶⁴ *Miracle Worker*, 223.

⁶⁵ Labahn ("Between Tradition", 179-81) argues that miracles in the fourth gospel are generally linked to the overarching theme of conflict. In his larger work, Labahn (*Lebensspender*, 484) suggests that in John's gospel the miracles are also formulated to demonstrate a christological fulfilment of the Old Testament promises of a judge (cf. Isa 26:19). This coming judge is no longer portrayed as a warrior against demonic powers, but rather against the ruler of the cosmos directly, who in fact is already conquered. This does not explain the continuing concern John expresses for disciples for the period after his departure (17:15). Nor does it explain occasional interest in angelic intermediaries or the continuing engagement with the claims to "have a demon".

⁶⁶ From the start Jesus is declared to take away the sin of the world; he will baptise with the Spirit (but is not baptised by John); he has angels descend and ascend upon him; he replaces Jewish rites of purification with something better; he replaces the Holy Place; he refers to living water; he heals at the pool in ch 5; he is called Holy One in 6:69; he washes feet in ch. 13; he is the unblemished lamb, etc. The concern for ritual purity also emerges ironically at the trial in 18:28; see

Accusations of having a demon can be one important part of a wider Johanne agenda of rivalry about the locus of holiness. Like these demonising accusations, issues of purity and pollution have at their core the question of identity and boundary—*who* is polluted and *who* is pure.

Implications of the accusations

It is now possible to follow up some of the implications of this analysis, and this will be done under three headings.

1. Group Identity and Conflict

It is striking how frank the fourth gospel is when presenting accusations of Jesus "having a demon". The Jewish opposition to Jesus is of course a well-known feature of this gospel. The demonising of Jesus can clearly be portrayed as an attempt by the accusing group to affirm its own values and to assert Jesus' deviant and threatening stance. But a *Christian evangelist* is after all writing this story, so why does he allow such a potentially embarrassing charge to remain in such stark form, and why does he reiterate it? It certainly confirms for his readers the extent of Jewish misunderstanding, but it also opens up a measure of vulnerability by suggesting that some people in his day did consider Jesus to be demonic.

Yet the accusation against Jesus does perhaps serve the author's purposes in other respects. Stevan Davies' work on *Jesus the Healer*⁶⁷ cites anthropological studies (by Erika Bourguignon) on experiences of possession, arguing that possession occurs in at least two contrasting forms: ranging from demon possession to "spirit" possession, the one malevolent and the other benevolent. Davies argues that Jesus and his followers believed that Jesus *was* possessed—that is, *spirit*-possessed.⁶⁸ In John, representatives of the established order

oppose him, yet even in these cases the power of Jesus seems to be recognised, while its source is debated. Moreover, anthropological studies suggest that possession plays a significant part in status enhancement in societies where social mobility was very limited.⁶⁹ Although Davies' study mostly focuses on Mark's gospel, he does note that in John 1:32–4 it is clear that the Johanne tradition knew of an association with the descent of the spirit on Jesus and the immediate witness that he was Son of God.⁷⁰ Even the words Jesus speaks are not his own (John 14:24). When the disciples receive the Spirit, the language of Jesus breathing upon them resonates with ideas of possession (John 20:22).⁷¹ Thus a *positive* possession of the spirit seems to be associated not only with Jesus but also eventually with his Paraclete-led followers.⁷² The issue then is not whether Jesus can be considered in some sense to possess the spirit, but rather the correct evaluation of the nature of this spirit—the *source* of Jesus' authority being a major recurring theme in John.⁷³

Indeed the accusations and counter-accusations in John over the source of the spirit he possesses may be essential to the group competition depicted in the gospel. On the one hand, Jesus is accused by the "established group" of being possessed—by a demon. They ironically recognise a form of power, but seek to label it as deviant.⁷⁴ On the other hand, when Jesus attacks his opponents, he accuses them of "belonging to your father, the devil" (John 8:44).⁷⁵ In this

⁶⁰ Cf. I.M. Lewis, *Exaltation Religion*, and Aune, "Magie", 1520–3, 1528–9.

⁶¹ Davies, *Healer*, 61.

⁷¹ Goulder (*Tide*, 123) wishes to show that John opposes a "possessorist" (Jewish Christian) understanding of a man Jesus being taken over by the Spirit. But John 1:32 and 20:22 at the very least seem to suggest that in *some sense* Jesus "possesses the Spirit". "Possessing" may be subtly distinguishable from "being possessed by".
⁷² John 20:23 also recalls the Matthean references to "binding" and "loosing" (cf. Matt 16:19; 18:18). Note binding spells discussed by C.A. Faraone, "The Agnostic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells", in *Magika Hiera, Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (ed. C.A. Faraone & D. Obbink: Oxford/New York: OUP, 1991), 3–32. Retaining the "sins" of someone "could fit easily into a larger pattern of political or social competition" (p. 17).

⁷³ The question of "possession/inspiration" can also be related to views of Jesus as "a prophet" (John 4:19, 44; 6:14; 7:40, 52; 9:17). The fourth gospel does not seem completely to repudiate the understanding of Jesus as a prophet, at least as a step towards the realisation of Jesus' identity. Even in John 8:40, John has Jesus describe himself as "a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God".
⁷⁴ Goulder, *Tide*, 121–7.

⁷⁵ Aune, "Magie", 1523. Aune also notes the view of P. Sarnain that the charges in John 7:12 and 47 are equivalent to the more direct charge of practising magic (p. 1540).

⁷⁶ This of course follows John 8:41, in which Jesus' opponents state not only that

M.W.G. Stibbe, *John* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 189. It also seems to mark a "boundary" when the term *dyōtōs* is applied not only to Jesus but also to disciples (John 10:36; 17:19). See J.T. Williams, "Cultic Elements in the Fourth Gospel", in *Studia Biblica* 1978, Vol. 2: *Papers on the Gospels* (ed. E.A. Livingstone, JSNTS 1978, 2; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978), 339–50.

⁶⁷ S.L. Davies, *Jesus the Healer. Possession, Trance and the Origins of Christianity* (New York: Continuum, 1995).

⁶⁸ Cf. Theissen, *Mineral Sources*, 88, with regard to Mark: "He is God's holy one (Mk 1:24) and is regarded as possessed (3:20ff)."

case a group is clearly being vilified rather than an individual: they collectively *belong to the devil*.⁷⁶

But is there any evidence that such accusations and counter-accusations were indeed relevant or applied to Jesus' followers? One never directly sees a charge from opponents that Jesus' followers were also thought to be demon-inspired, but one does find the intriguing warning in 16:2: "They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are *offering service to God*." Does this contain a hint that believers might indeed have faced the kind of accusations that Jesus is depicted in the gospel as having faced? The Farewell Discourses make clear that believers would share with Jesus the world's hate and persecution (15:18-20; 17:14). Jesus prays for their protection in 17:15. The affirmation that they have the Spirit of *truth*, which the world cannot receive, is another possible pointer to a situation in which they needed to legitimate themselves. Such Christians must have been considered deviants and dangerous, if they were eventually expelled from synagogues. In a religious context such deviants were not infrequently described as Satanic or demonic. In an entirely different context, one finds this levelled against the Jews themselves when in Rev 2:9 and 3:9 they are labelled "the synagogue of Satan."⁷⁷ These observations are highly suggestive. Those in the synagogue must have thought that they were serving God by expelling the deviant Christians and by continuing to promote threatening behaviour towards them in view of the evil which they associated with these people. Is it not likely that this was expressed by demonisation? Is it not also possible that such Christians retaliated with counter-accusations, not dissimilar to those found in Rev 2 and 3? These must remain questions, but further evidence for the use and experience of demonisation by Johannine Christians will be considered in the final section.

they "have one Father, even God" [extending the previous discussion about their descent from Abraham].

⁷⁶ R.A. Whitacre (*Johannine Polemic: The Role of Tradition and Theology* [SBLDS 67; Chico: Scholars, 1982] 72-6) draws upon de la Potterie's analysis of the chiasmic structure of John 8:42-47 to show that this charge lies at the centre of the group of sayings concerning the relationship of the Jews to God and to Jesus. See also Subbe, *John's Gospel*, 47-9.

⁷⁷ A.Y. Collins ("Vilification and Self-Definition in the Book of Revelation", *HTR* 79 [1986] 310-14) persuasively rejects views that "those who call themselves Jews and are not, but rather are the synagogue of Satan" refers to Judaising Christians rather than genuine Jews.

2. *World View*

John's interest is not limited to demonising one's human opponents. One must also reckon with the place of the Devil/Satan/the Evil One in the Johannine world view. In John Jesus may not oppose Satan by means of exorcisms or in a temptation narrative,⁷⁸ but there is a conflict nonetheless and it is one which appears to be invested with genuinely cosmic dimensions as well as social implications.

That John frequently (even if not wholly consistently) represents *the world/kosmos* as part of the opposition to Jesus is well-known.⁷⁹ It is perhaps therefore not surprising that a reasonably distinctive way in which John's gospel represents "the devil" (which seems closely linked also to John's use of the terms Satan and the Evil One) is as "the ruler of this world".⁸⁰ Jesus' victory over the ruler of this world is announced in John 12:31, seemingly prophetically, just as it is announced in 12:23 that Jesus' hour has now come, even though the crucifixion-resurrection-ascension still lie ahead in the narrative sequence. The victory is declared again in John 14:30 and 16:11 (cf. 16:33).

This opens up important issues in Johannine eschatology. If Jesus is viewed as having conquered the ruler of this world, what exactly happens to Satan⁸¹ and what exactly happens to "the world" in the thought of the fourth evangelist?

⁷⁸ Some have found the three temptations expressed in other parts of the fourth gospel, but through more human mediation (cf. John 6:15; 6:30-31; 7:1-9); see Pagels (following R.E. Brown), "Social History", 42.

⁷⁹ As J. Ashton (*Understanding the Fourth Gospel* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1991] 206-8) notes, there are two distinct oppositions implied by *kosmos* in the fourth gospel: vertical and horizontal.

⁸⁰ As J. Painter ("Theology, Eschatology and the Prologue of John", *SJT* 46 [1993] 32) notes, however, there is "no attempt to explain how it came to be that the world created by the *Logos* now finds itself to be dominated by darkness".

⁸¹ Pagels ("Social History", 52) concludes that "John... dismisses the device of the devil as an independent supernatural character [it, indeed, he knew of it, as I suspect he did]. Instead, as John tells the story, Satan, like God himself, here appears in the form of *incarnation*. First he becomes incarnate in Judas Iscariot, then in the Jewish authorities... and finally in those John calls 'the Jews'." Certainly the fourth gospel and 1 John freely link human opposition with the devil/Satan/antichrist. But the claim (p. 40) that Satan never appears in the fourth gospel independently of human beings depends upon how one interprets "the ruler of this world" in 12:31; 16:11; 14:30. J.H. Charlesworth ("A Critical Comparison of the Dualism in 1QS 3:13-4:26 and the Dualism Contained in the Gospel of John", in *John and Qumran* [ed. J.H. Charlesworth; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1972] 92-3) admits that some vestiges of an older world view remain, but "the main thrust of this Gospel is that the devil has been demythologized. The reason for this Johannine characteristic is, of course, the belief that through his crucifixion Christ overcame

It is certainly not true that the eschatology presented in the fourth gospel is either entirely realised or entirely individualistic (see John 5:27 "the time is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out"). C.F.D. Moule's⁸² attempt to explain the tensions in the fourth gospel not primarily in redactional terms but as shifts between individual and corporate perspectives does not fully explain the Johannine claims that the ruler of this world has been conquered. This victory is not just concerned with individuals, and yet it seems to be more realised than future. David Rensberger has argued with some force that often in John's gospel the writer has a wider perspective than simply an individual's face. A political perspective often emerges and an interest in the world at large.⁸³ If one extends this "cosmic" perspective further, then one again returns to the question: what exactly happens to Satan in the world view of the fourth gospel?

More particularly, in what sense has Satan been already defeated by the death and exaltation of Jesus—if the followers of Jesus are still facing opposition, as the farewell discourses make clear? Some have argued that John is simply affirming that Satan is defeated *in principle*. Satan has really lost, even though admittedly he is still active, even after Jesus' death. The reader knows Satan is still active because John 17:15–16 records: "I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the Evil One."⁸⁴ They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." In the world there is still tribulation, trouble and, significantly, the influence of the Evil One. Such an attitude is clearly reflected too in 1 John and 2 John. But how can Satan remain active if he has been defeated? Perhaps this is simply an unresolved tension which the fourth evangelist/final redactor, not unlike many others, simply had not worked out. His high Christology demanded that all was now complete, in the revealing activity and decisive "lifting up" of Jesus Son of God,

the world (16:33) so that the devil is now *defeated* and *destroyed*" (p. 93). It is unclear why the defeat of the devil requires demythologising him, however.

⁸² C.F.D. Moule, "A Neglected Feature in the Interpretation of Johannine Eschatology," in *Studies in John: Presented to Professor Dr J.N. Scriver on the occasion of his seventieth birthday* (NovTSup 24; Leiden: Brill, 1970) 155–60; Ashton, *Understanding*, 220–6.

⁸³ D.K. Rensberger, *Overcoming the World: Politics and Community in the Gospel of John* (London: SPCK, 1988).

⁸⁴ Taking τὸν κόσμον as masculine, not neuter, and thus as equivalent to Satan or "the devil".

but he knew that believers still faced tribulations, deceivers and evil influences. Why the "victory" is not yet fully *effective* is simply considered unclear.

It is possible, however, to suggest that the author's world view was more coherent. In John's dualism of the heavenly and the earthly, the presence of evil is clearly more associated with "this world" (the earthly, below) than with the higher heavenly sphere. Hence the striking title: "the ruler of *this world*", in contrast to rabbinic writings where the prince of this world more commonly referred to God.⁸⁵ In the fourth gospel Satan and God (or his envoys) are not depicted as locked in battle in heaven. The battle appears to have been conducted more by God's broker entering this world.

Why should this be so? Liettaert Peerbolte notes that characteristic of some Christian eschatology was a two-stage victory of God over Satan. First, Satan falls from heaven (cf. the vision in Luke 10:18 and the dragon's fall in Rev 12:7–12 where he is "cast to the earth" with "his angels"). Later, Satan is confined to the abyss, a place of punishment (Rev 20:10; cf. also Luke 8:30–1). In the fourth gospel Jesus' death and exaltation seem to have accomplished the initial victory. But after the death of Jesus, believers then appear to find themselves between two such events of Satan's downfall. In Liettaert Peerbolte's words: "The Dragon has been cast out of heaven but still rages on earth."⁸⁶ Thus for them part of the question of what happens now to the ruler of this world is the question of what happens now to this world.

The fate of believers is simply that they leave the world. In one sense, they leave it *in the present*, in that they *define their present identity*

⁸⁵ So, among others, B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1972) 433. J.E. Bruns ("A Note on John 16:33 and 1 John 2:13–14," *JBL* 86 [1967] 451–3) notes that the prince of this world is scarcely distinguishable from "the world" in Johannine writings, or from other designations such as Evil One, Devil and Satan. He notes that each of these figures is essentially a murderer and suggests that this can be compared to the Angel of Death (but not Satan) in some rabbinic writings and 2 Bar 21:23. See also A. Segal, "Ruler of This World: Attitudes about Mediator Figures and the Importance of Sociology for Self-Definition," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, Vol. 2, *Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman World* (ed. E.P. Sanders et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981) 245–68.

⁸⁶ *Antiquities*, 136. The fall to this world may be to the sphere below the seventh heaven (rather like the earthly stratosphere)—part of this world but still more mobile than simply earthly. This sublunar arena may be compared to the "air" referred to in Eph 2:2. Cf. also Philo, *On the Giants* 6–8, who locates between heaven and earth "the other element, the air" which is also filled with living beings and spirits.

as those who "are not of the world" (John 17:14, 16), who immediately participate in a unity of the Father and the Son and in the protective pocket of fellowship characterising the believing community. The new bond of Father, Son and believer strengthens the boundaries against the hostile world. The new commandment to love one another further fosters close interaction within the group. The Paraclete is given to them and opposes the world. This all provides powerful reassurance to insiders, especially if they viewed their outside opposition as not only human but also inspired by evil forces.⁸⁷

Followers leave the world *eventually* when they too join Jesus in the place he has prepared for them with the Father (John 14:2, cf. also 12:32).⁸⁸ So what care do believers have about what happens to the world? In effect, it is simply isolated from where believers are. It is quite possible therefore to see the victory over Satan simply as the isolation of Satan *to* this world, not his expulsion *from* it. In this case, there is no second stage to Satan's downfall necessarily envisaged. Satan is now defeated because he has no influence in the heavenly sphere, and in the earthly sphere he represents that over against which they define their group, in which they have the prophylactic protection of their community and the Paraclete, and from which they will escape. Thus the victory over Satan is not just a "moral victory"⁸⁹ or victory "in principle".⁹⁰ It is related to believers' understanding of their present identity as well as their destiny. But one should not be surprised that John has no clear plan for a new world as such. It becomes the tragic desert to which Satan is confined. There is no expulsion of evil from it.⁹¹ Just as evil is not banished from individuals by exorcisms in the gospel, so also with respect to Satan and the world. The physical body is a microcosm of the social body, the world. What is offered is a more radical alternative: an

alternative "birth", a new life with God and fellowship with believers.

It might be objected, however, that the reference in John 12:31 to the ruler of this world being "cast out" might naturally suggest "out of this world" and therefore be more consistent with a view of the purification of this world than with the isolation of Satan to this world. It is possible to respond in at least two ways. On the one hand, it is not absolutely clear that the text here should read "cast out". Some manuscripts read "cast down", which in fact sets up a contrast (perhaps too well?) to John 12:32 about Jesus being lifted up. This would nicely fit the idea of Satan confined to the lower sphere, while Jesus is lifted up and draws others to him. On the other hand, if one accepts the stronger manuscript support (including P⁶⁶) for "casting out", then it is necessary to ask what this means. Cast out from where?⁹² R.E. Brown⁹³ considered this a reference not to Satan's expulsion from heaven, but to his loss of authority over this world. Brown realised, however, that this poses a problem in terms of the current influence of the Evil One over the world (cf. also 1 John 5:19).⁹⁴ He then resorted to referring to a victory *in principle* and to tensions in Johannine thought. The matter may well be simpler than this. Surely, a natural reading would be to suggest that the Evil One has lost authority over those who can now be described as no longer of the world, the children of God (John 1:13).⁹⁵ He is "cast out" in that believers define themselves over against him and his sphere of influence. It is a matter of identity.⁹⁶ John 12:32 graphically depicts the lifting up of Jesus from the earth and the drawing of his followers to himself. Satan's loss of direct authority over Jesus' followers is manifested above all in the death-resurrection-ascension of the Son of God. Yet Satan's authority has been fettered and limited, rather

⁸⁷ *Contra* Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 226. Plummer ("Absence", 363) cites Theissen, but rightly notes that Satan is nonetheless perceived to be a real foe.

⁸⁸ Worship will be associated neither with the Jerusalem temple (John 2) nor with Mt Gerizim (John 4:20–21), and even the Logos effectively finds no place in his world (John 1:11). The world offers little for believers.

⁸⁹ Lindars, *John*, 433.

⁹⁰ R.E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Vol. 1: i–xii, *Introduction, Translation and Notes* (AB 29a; New York: Doubleday, 1966) 1.477.

⁹¹ Thus the world is not inherently corrupt, unlike the Evil One. It is just controlled by bad things; it is the domain of Satan. The world can be loved in the sense that humanity can be loved, but not in sense of that which controls it and from which it will never be free. Rather believers become free from the world.

⁹² There are six uses of ἐξῆλθεν in the fourth gospel (cf. also 3 John 10 with regard to Diotrephes expelling some members from the church), four of which use ἔξω rather than specifying more precisely the place from which expulsion occurs (John 6:37; 9:34, 35; 12:31). In John 9:34–35, and perhaps 6:37, *one's place in the community of faith* seems to be at issue.

⁹³ *John*, 1477.

⁹⁴ Brown (*John*, 1477) rightly sees that the writer is not "a hopeless romantic" who cannot recognise existing evil in the world.

⁹⁵ Cf. John 6:37: "he who comes to me I shall in no way cast out."

⁹⁶ Note that "all" in 12:32 is modified to "sons of light" by 12:36. If Satan is eternally linked to this world, note that Jesus' kingship is not of this world (John 18:36).

than destroyed. The evangelist is still sufficiently in touch with the realities of Christian existence in the world to realise that the world (that which is "outside") is still threatening for believers.⁹⁷ It is not surprising therefore that those in the world, even if not of it, will still need reassurance and some explanation. The explanation is that the world and the "ruler of this world" are still united. The difference lies in how Christians define themselves with respect to both.

Neither evil opposition nor spiritual support has been completely de-mythologised. Supporting believers is the Paraclete, an almost angelic prosecutor of the world as well as guide,⁹⁸ and on the other side is the ruler of this world or the Evil One. Rather than de-mythologising, this is not far removed from what A. Segal suggests is a kind of polemical mythologising.⁹⁹

Such an explanation integrates the various strands of our previous discussion about exorcisms and accusations of demon possession with John's eschatology and world view. It has not been necessary to relate this discussion to a redactional theory of stages. The fourth gospel may well have had an extended period of composition, but the redaction which is possessed today does not necessarily lack unity in its perspective on these matters. The evangelist defines and legitimises believers by demonising their opponents. Because the opponents are in large part their parent group, these opponents figure large in their world view and self-understanding, to the extent of a near (but not total) convergence of "Jews" and "the world". The break in relations has been sufficiently strong for these believers to anticipate persecution, but nonetheless they have prepared a strategy in terms of world view and community to help to cope with such fears.

They remain of course vulnerable, perhaps particularly to their parent group. In such a situation one might also expect a concern about waverers and apostates within the community of believers. Such a consequence may in fact be explicit in John 16:1 where Jesus issues warnings to keep his followers from "falling away" (οὐκ ἀπολλοῦσθαι).¹⁰⁰ This takes us to the final section.

⁹⁷ Contrast J. L. Kovacs, "Now shall the ruler of this world be driven out: Jesus' death as Cosmic Battle in John 12:20-36", *JBL* 114 (1995) 227-47.

⁹⁸ See J. A. Draper, "The Sociological Function of the Spirit/Paraclete in the Farewell Discourses in the Fourth Gospel", *New* 26 (1992) 24-7 (following Sekki's 1989 work on *ruah* in the Dead Sea Scrolls).

⁹⁹ Segal, "Ruler", esp. 266.

¹⁰⁰ So also with the emphasis on "abiding" in the farewell discourses.

3. *Opposition Within*

Until now, our concern has been mainly with *external* opposition to believers. There is, however, another sphere of interest: opposition and betrayal *within*. In the gospel, this is depicted most clearly in the case of Judas.¹⁰¹ In the Johannine epistles, one finds the secessionists—those former Johannine Christians who went out from the parent *Johannine* group. In both cases these former insiders receive a quasi-Satanic eschatological label. Judas is called the "son of perdition" (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀπολλέμενου) in John 17:12; the secessionists were called, amongst other things, "antichrists" (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; cf. 2 John 7).

Wendy Sproston¹⁰² compared the "son of perdition" label given to Judas with similar phrases at Qumran (in the *Manual of Discipline* and *Damascus Rule*) and in 2 Thess 2. In the latter it appears equivalent to the "man of lawlessness", describing the final enemy just prior to the ultimate attack of evil before the parousia. This does not appear to be Satan himself but rather Satan's representative, whose downfall signifies the final collapse of Satan's schemes.¹⁰³

This leads to an interesting comparison with the "antichrist" terminology in 1 John. The term, apparently distinctive to the Johannine epistles at the time, is probably used to indicate an *opponent* of Christ rather than a false messiah or prophet although it seems to have been associated mainly with false teaching. As R. Schnackenburg argues, at this stage the idea of the antichrist is again not Satan himself. That identification belongs to a later period.¹⁰⁴

Thus closely associated with the work of the Evil One in the world is the activity of these figures who are under the *particular* sway of

¹⁰¹ But note also John 6:60-66; 15:2. With regard to Judas, I refer to my paper "Judas in the Fourth Gospel" presented to the SNTS Johannine Seminar in Copenhagen, August 1996.

¹⁰² W. Sproston, "Satan in the Fourth Gospel", in *Studia Biblica* 1978, Vol. 2: *Papers on the Gospels* (ed. E. A. Livingstone; JSNTS 2; Sheffield: JSOT, 1980) 307-11; also idem, "The Scripture" in John 17:12, in *Scripture: Meaning and Method, Essays Presented to Anthony Tyrrell Hanson for his seventieth birthday* (ed. B. P. Thompson; Hull: Hull University, 1987) 24-36.

¹⁰³ Sproston, "Satan", 310; see also Liettaert Peerbolte, *Antecedents*, 75-89. In Sproston's more recent article ("Scripture", 26-30), she links Judas as "son of destruction" to the "chief" who "steals, scatters and destroys" in John 10:10. Cf. A. Reinhartz (*The Word in the World. The Cosmological Tale in the Fourth Gospel* [SBL 145; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992] 91-2), who primarily sees the thief as Satan, who has snatched Judas.

¹⁰⁴ *The Johannine Epistles. An Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1992) 135. Cf. *Jac. Ica*, 4:1ff.

Satan—Judas in the fourth gospel and the antichrists of the epistles. In each case these seem to be former *insiders*, who are now outsiders and are treated with particular hostility and suspicion. Their titles acknowledge that they are under the direct control of Satan. There is again no question of these individuals being exorcised or cleansed.¹⁰⁵ The Johannine world view remains consistent here. They represent the crossing of a boundary; they are a significant part of the continuing influence of Satan in the world as it affects true believers, an influence which has not been eradicated. Those who have "overcome" the Evil One are those who remain loyal to the community (1 John 2:13–14) and who have not gone out into the world.

Therefore, just as the believers who are addressed in the fourth gospel were once considered deviants and were expelled by their parent group (the synagogue), so also in the Johannine epistles (and perhaps even hinted at with regard to Judas in the gospel) they viewed their own deviants in a similar way. In 1 John the *secessionists* are now the children of the devil (1 John 3:10), bearing the spirit of the antichrist (1 John 4:3), being antichrists (1 John 2:18, 22).¹⁰⁶ Once the break has taken place, the author associates murderous intent with the secessionists (cf. 1 John 3:11–15) in ways reminiscent of the description of opponents in the gospel. This must have been important for the self-legitimation of the parent Johannine community, a further declaration of the evil intent of their opponents. Through such accusations, the boundaries of the new parent group are tightened and affirmed, and the deviants are controlled, once again "in the name of community values."¹⁰⁷ In the accusations of being under the control of the devil, the Johannine Christians in 1 John used against their opponents the kind of language they knew—the kind of accusations they too had probably experienced.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Stephen C. Barton

1. *Introduction: The Contemporary Situation and the Nature of the Church*

The history of the twentieth century is a history of calamitous failures in human neighbourliness. In consequence, there is widespread recognition today of the need to find ways of building and maintaining patterns of sociality which are life-giving. So strong are the perceived threats to human sociality that many political, social and religious leaders are turning their attention to ways of resisting the threats and making space for the renewal of society. In his Reith Lectures for 1990, for example, the Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, highlighted a number of threats to our social fabric: economic individualism, moral pluralism and the privatisation of values, the loss of institutions that sustain communities of memory and character, the shift from a traditional duty-based ethic to a secular rights-based ethic, the tendency of the religions to polarise into extremes of liberalism or conservatism, and so on. In the light of such threats, Sacks calls for the renewal of community, both at the local level of families, churches and voluntary associations, and at the national level of society now reconceived as a "community of communities".¹

Building communities which allow all people to attain their full humanity as children of God are central *Christian* concerns also. Indeed, the vocation of Israel according to the Old Testament and of the Church according to the New is so to share in the life and love of God that it becomes the people and the place where the virtues and skills for life together among the nations are known and practised. The truthful, just and life-giving encounter between human beings in all their diversity which constitutes community is dependent upon true worship of the truthful, justifying, life-giving God. This means that true community is a *gift of divine grace*, and its quality as

¹⁰⁵ See also J.S. Wright, "Satan, Beelzebul, Devil, Exorcism: ἐξορκισμός," in *NIDNTT* 3 (1978) 475: "Deceiving spirits inspired false prophets (1 John. 4:1, 2), were not exorcised (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3)."

¹⁰⁶ For a further example of the use of vilification of Christian rivals by accusations of being associated with "the ruler of this world," see Ignatius' letters (*Eph.* 17:1), discussed by Collins, "Vilification", 311.

¹⁰⁷ See Esler, *First Christians*, 141.

¹ J. Sacks, *The Persistence of Faith: Religion, Morality and Society in a Secular Age* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991).